

Romaine: Town Board Unanimously Approves Carmans River Plan

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Supervisor Ed Romaine (center right), Assemblyman Fred Thiele (center left), State Senator Ken LaValle (center) and the Brookhaven Town Board join with students from Patchogue-Medford and Longwood high schools to celebrate the adoption of the Carmans River conservation and Management Plan at the October 15 Town Board Meeting.

Conservation Plan Will Protect Over 1,600 Acres In Critical Watershed Area

Farmingville, NY - The Brookhaven Town Board this evening unanimously approved the Carmans River Conservation and Management Plan. The plan contains 19 categories of recommendations to preserve and protect the Carmans River. When implemented, it will guide land use in the watershed for many years to come and serve as a model for environmental preservation. This plan expands the core area of the Central Pine Barrens region by over 1,600 acres and, for the first time in history, expands the compatible growth region as well. It promotes open space acquisitions; recommends landmark nitrate and sanitary standards; and recommends a series of up-zonings to truly protect the watershed.

Supervisor Ed Romaine said, "I want to thank the Town Board, the committee and all the staff members and volunteers who worked so hard to draft a plan that will forever benefit the Carmans River Watershed. It's remarkable that a previous plan was rejected by this board amid such controversy and with little reason to believe that it could be resurrected so quickly. The major difference is that we chose to go the route of protecting the river, not development, as was the case with the first plan. Now we have a plan that provides a clear vision of what needs to be done in order to protect and preserve one of our Town's most beautiful and environmentally significant natural assets."

The Carmans River is one of Brookhaven's most critical natural resources. Protecting it not only protects the river watershed, but our drinking water and the Great South Bay. Brookhaven now has the opportunity to better protect the Carmans River and its watershed. In so doing, we can demonstrate a fair, straightforward, cost and time efficient method for equitable water resource protection in relation to improvements in where and how we live, work, and enjoy ourselves. The Carmans River Conservation and Management Plan intends to promote clear water and its protected land, with a clear purpose, by a clear process.

Attending the meeting and speaking on the plan were students and teachers from the Longwood and Patchogue-

Medford school districts that recently engaged in hands-on science exploration of the Carmans River. The program was conceived to help students develop an appreciation for and knowledge of the Carmans River ecosystem; to collect useful scientific data in regard to the river's status and to allow students to become stewards of the river's water quality and natural resources.

Councilwoman Connie Kepert said, "As the Councilwoman representing the communities within the Carmans River Corridor, I am proud to be a part of this landmark legislation that is a major step forward in the preservation of this river that is of great ecological, societal, and historical significance. I have always been an advocate of the dedication of open space funds to the purchase of sensitive land surrounding this precious natural resource, and have proudly sponsored and passed legislation which has protected critical parcels within the corridor."

"This is a great example of how government can work hand-in-hand with the community to do the right thing for the environment and the people," said Councilman Tim Mazzei. "I was very happy to throw my full support behind the Supervisor's plan and I thank all those who were responsible for drafting a document that we can all be proud of."

Councilwoman Kathleen Walsh said, "By presenting a plan that takes into account the concerns of residents, the Supervisor was able to reach a consensus among the Town Board to adopt. Clearly, this plan is the result of hard work by many people over the past few years, most of whom were volunteers, and I thank them for making such a great contribution to our Town."

"Unlike the plan that was rejected during the previous administration, this one places the focus on exactly where it should be; conservation, protection and preservation of the river," said Councilwoman Bonner. "I commend the Supervisor for keeping the entire process open and transparent to the public, listening to their concerns and encouraging input from the Town Council. This is a landmark plan that will secure the ecological future of the Carmans River Watershed for generations to come."

"Although no legislative endeavor is ever perfect, this Carmans River Plan is much improved from last year's following many of the suggestions made by the four council members who had refused to vote in favor of last year's version. It will greatly improve protection of this nationally recognized river system. Most significantly, it leaves land use and development decision-making in the hands of the people's representatives, the Town Board. Therefore, the public can continue to hold their elected officials accountable for these decisions. In many ways this is a triumph for those who refused to compromise away fundamental powers of our local town representatives who hold them in trust for our residents."

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